

THE ANGEL OF PEACE

Florentines to give a sinister interpretation to the second papal demand.

Foiled at Bologna, the Cardinal of Geneva had taken the Bretons into winter quarters at Cesena, the only large town in Romagna that now remained faithful to the Church. The overbearing brutality of these ruffians, backed by the Cardinal, who gave them leave to take what they needed from the citizens without payment, brought about an armed rising in Cesena on February 1, in which some three or four hundred of the Bretons were killed, and the rest driven from the city, or forced to take refuge with the Cardinal in the citadel. There was no thought of rebellion against the Pope : ^{tc} "Viva la Chiesa," had been the shout of the populace, no less than "Muoianno i Brettoni" ; and, on the following day, trusting in the pacific declaration of the Cardinal, the insurgents laid down their arms. But already, at the former's summons, Hawkwood and his English were hastening from Faenza; joining forces with the infuriated Bretons, they entered Cesena at night by the citadel, and were ordered to put the inhabitants to the sword. To do him justice, Hawkwood hesitated, and made some sort of remonstrance ; but the Cardinal insisted. On the next day, February 3, an appalling massacre followed. Men, women, and children were slaughtered indiscriminately ; the English were chiefly bent on plunder, but the Bretons, thirsting for vengeance, did not even spare the infants at the breast or in the cradle, and committed unspeakable horrors of every description. The churches were desecrated, those of the friars who attempted to give sanctuary to the fugitives were murdered with the rest. At least four thousand of the inhabitants of Cesena were thus butchered; fifteen thousand survivors, starving and perishing with the cold, fled in utter destitution, to die on the way, or find shelter, as best they could, in the neighbouring towns. A thrill of horror ran through all Italy—it is impossible to set down on paper even a small part of the unutterable atrocities that the common report of the time ascribed to the mercenary soldiers of the Church. ^{tc} "Nero himself never committed such cruelty," writes the